

Rare Victoria Cross awarded following Far East battles in Second World War at risk of leaving the UK

- Medal, along with four others, is valued at more than £660,000
- Cross was awarded posthumously to Squadron Leader A.S.K. Scarf who died after returning from a raid gravely injured

A Victoria Cross awarded to RAF Squadron Leader A.S.K. Scarf is at risk of leaving the UK after being sold abroad for more than £660,000.

The medal, along with four others – the 1939-1945 Star, Pacific Star, Defence Medal and British War Medal – was awarded posthumously to Scarf in 1946. The Victoria Cross was presented to his widow, Mrs Elizabeth Scarf, by King George VI at Buckingham Palace.

While the campaign medals within this group are relatively common and were issued to all personnel who met the qualifying criteria, the Victoria Cross is incredibly rare. Only 1,358 have been awarded since its inception in 1856 with just 181 awarded during the Second World War. Of the 22 awarded during the conflict to the RAF, this Victoria Cross is of particular interest because it is the only one awarded to the RAF for their service in the Far East.

Scarf's Victoria Cross was awarded in recognition of his bravery on a daylight raid on Singora, Malaya, on 9 December 1941. Scarf was responsible for spearheading the raid which saw all available aircraft ordered to take part. He had just taken off when enemy aircraft arrived – destroying or disabling the rest of the machines. He flew alone to Singora and, despite attacks from enemy fighter planes, completed his bombing run. On his way back his aircraft was attacked and he was severely wounded. He crash landed at Alor Star without causing any injury to his crew. He died two hours later in hospital.

Scarf's pregnant wife was a nurse and based at the Alor Star hospital but had been evacuated south. The two other crewmen on Scarf's plane were also given awards for their courage during the action. Sergeant (later Squadron Leader) Paddy Calder was awarded a Distinguished Flying Medal and Sergeant Cyril Rich, who was killed in action in 1943, was posthumously mentioned in Dispatches.

Arts Minister Stuart Andrew said:

Stories like these remind us of the sacrifices those who served in the Second World War made for the freedoms we enjoy today.

This Victoria Cross and collection of medals represent not only A.S.K. Scarf's story but the stories and experiences of all those

who fought, lived and died in the conflict. I hope that a UK buyer can be found so these incredibly important objects can be displayed for future generations to see.

The minister's decision follows the advice of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest (RCEWA). The committee noted the medals represented an extraordinary and highly poignant story of great personal courage from an under-researched campaign of the Second World War. As the only Victoria Cross awarded to the RAF for the Far East and wider Pacific campaign, the medals represent a unique and significant element of a particular moment in British military history.

Committee Member, Tim Pestell, said:

Famous as the ultimate symbol of bravery in combat, the Victoria Cross remains our most nationally significant military award following its establishment over 160 years ago. The example in this group of medals provides a poignant yet powerful reminder of the attributes required to win the award, in a tale that could have come straight from a Boy's Own story. Not only does Squadron Leader Scarf's award speak eloquently of the determination and bravery displayed in winning a VC, its acquisition by a UK institution would provide a powerful reminder of the sacrifices made by British and Commonwealth servicemen fighting in the 'forgotten war' of the Far East.

The RCEWA made its recommendation on the grounds of the sets outstanding significance for the study of the British Far East campaign during the Second World War as well as the role of the RAF within this context.

The decision on the export licence application for the medal will be deferred for a period ending on 27 January 2023 inclusive. At the end of the first deferral period owners will have a consideration period of 15 business days to consider any offer(s) to purchase the set of medals at the recommended price of £660,000 (plus VAT of £22,000 which can be reclaimed by an eligible institution). The second deferral period will commence following the signing of an Option Agreement and will last for three months.

ENDS

Notes to editors

1. Organisations or individuals interested in purchasing the medals should contact the RCEWA on 0161 934 4317.
2. Provenance: This medal set was awarded posthumously to Mrs Elizabeth 'Sallie' Scarf, the widow of the deceased Squadron Leader Arthur 'Pongo' Scarf. The Victoria Cross was presented by King George VI at Buckingham Palace on 30 June 1946. It has been passed down through the family into the hands of the present owner, who is a direct descendent of Scarf.
3. The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of

Cultural Interest is an independent body, serviced by The Arts Council, which advises the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on whether a cultural object, intended for export, is of national importance under specified criteria.

4. [Arts Council England](#) is the national development agency for creativity and culture. ACE have set out their strategic vision in Let's Create that by 2030 want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. ACE invest public money from the Government and The National Lottery to help support the sector and to deliver this vision.
5. Following the [Covid-19](#) crisis, the Arts Council developed a £160 million Emergency Response Package, with nearly 90% coming from the National Lottery, for organisations and individuals needing support. ACE are also one of the bodies responsible for administering the Government's unprecedented Culture Recovery Fund.

[PM call with President Macron of France: 28 October 2022](#)

Press release

The Prime Minister spoke to French President Macron this morning.



The Prime Minister spoke to French President Macron this morning.

President Macron congratulated him on his appointment, and the Prime Minister stressed the importance he places on the UK's relationship with France – our neighbour and ally.

The leaders agreed that there are a huge range of areas where UK-France cooperation is vital, including on Ukraine, climate, defence and the economy. The Prime Minister also noted the strong historic and cultural links between our countries, as exemplified by President Macron's moving words following

the death of Her Majesty The Queen.

The Prime Minister and President Macron discussed a range of global issues, including Russia's invasion of Ukraine. They agreed on the importance of continuing to work in support of Ukraine. As people across Europe face a difficult winter, with rising energy costs resulting from Putin's invasion, the leaders resolved to work together to secure a more stable energy future. This includes increasing cooperation on nuclear energy.

The Prime Minister stressed the importance for both nations to make the Channel route completely unviable for people traffickers. The leaders committed to deepening our partnership to deter deadly journeys across the Channel that benefit organised criminals.

The Prime Minister and President Macron looked forward to meeting soon, and to holding a UK-France Summit next year.

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New package of measures announced to support poultry industry with bird flu

New government support for the poultry industry has been announced today (Friday 28th October) to assist farmers and producers with the impacts of bird flu. The United Kingdom is dealing with its worst ever bird flu outbreak with over 200 cases confirmed across the country in the last 12 months.

Under the new plans, the Government will alter the existing bird flu compensation scheme allowing compensation to be paid to farmers from the outset of planned culling rather than at the end. This will allow us to provide swifter payments to help stem any cash flow pressures and give earlier certainty about entitlement to compensation. The payments better reflect the impact of outbreaks on farmers.

In consultation with the Food Standards Agency, an easement to marketing rules is also being introduced in England. The measures mean that farmers who breed turkeys, geese or ducks for their meat will have the option to slaughter their flocks early and to freeze these products, which can then be defrosted and sold to consumers between the period 28 November and 31 December 2022. This option will give farmers certainty over business planning.

We have a highly resilient food supply chain, producing over 11 million turkeys in the United Kingdom every year, with just under two thirds of these consumed over the Christmas period.

Farming Minister Mark Spencer said:

Farmers and poultry producers are facing real pressures as a result of this avian flu outbreak, and we know many are concerned about the impact on their flocks

We hope the practical solutions announced today will help provide greater financial certainty. We very much appreciate the continued cooperation from the sector as we battle this insidious disease and will continue to keep the situation under close review

Last week, the Chief Veterinary Officer [introduced a national Avian Influenza Prevention Zone](#) meaning that bird keepers must implement strict biosecurity measures to safeguard their flocks from this highly infectious disease. In addition to this, a regional housing measure remains in place across Norfolk, Suffolk and parts of Essex, where keepers must house their flocks until further notice.

All bird keepers (whether they are pet birds, a commercial farm or just a few birds in a backyard flock) must remain vigilant and help prevent avian influenza by:

- cleanse and disinfect clothing, footwear, equipment and vehicles before and after contact with poultry and captive birds – if practical, use disposable protective clothing
- reduce the movement of people, vehicles or equipment to and from areas where poultry and captive birds are kept, to minimise contamination from manure, slurry and other products, and use effective vermin control
- keep records of mortality, movement of poultry and poultry products and any changes in production
- thoroughly clean and disinfect housing on a continuous basis
- keep fresh disinfectant at the right concentration at all farm and poultry housing entry and exit points
- minimise direct and indirect contact between poultry and captive birds and wild birds, including making sure all feed and water is not accessible to wild birds
- prevent access by poultry to ponds and watercourses and ensure that birds are kept in fenced or enclosed areas

Public health advice remains that the risk to human health from the virus is very low and food standards bodies advise that avian influenzas pose a very low food safety risk for UK consumers. Do not touch or pick up any dead or sick birds that you find and instead report them to the Defra helpline on 03459 33 55 77.

More information on the current bird flu outbreak can be found in [our rolling news story](#).

Update on progress on Environmental Targets

News story

Summary of progress on Environmental Targets set out in the Environment Act, following the publication of a Written Ministerial Statement.



There has been significant work undertaken to progress the ambitious environmental targets resulting from the Environment Act 2021.

The Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) received over 180,000 responses from a range of individuals, businesses and other organisations to the target consultation which closed on 27th June 2022.

In light of the volume of material and the significant public response it is not possible to publish the updated environmental targets as originally intended by the end of October 2022.

Environment Secretary, Therese Coffey said:

I was part of the ministerial team that created the 25 Year Environment Plan and prepared the Environment Bill presented to Parliament in 2019.

Defra will continue to work at pace to finalise these environmental targets.

The Government remains committed to halting the decline in species by 2030 and bringing forward the wider suite of targets, which will help clean up our air, reduce pollution, keep our water clean and reduce waste. To date the Government has published over 800 pages of evidence that underpin the draft targets, based on three years of detailed consideration of the scientific and economic evidence.

The Environment Act will deliver the most ambitious environmental programme

of any country and help support our international commitments to protect 30 per cent of land and ocean by 2030. The UK has played a leading role in driving countries around the world to sign up to ambitious targets to reverse biodiversity loss, for example through our work to negotiate the Leaders Pledge for Nature last year, which commits world leaders to taking action to drive sustainable food production, end the illegal wildlife trade and tackle climate change.

A Written Ministerial Statement has been laid in Parliament to update both houses, this can be read [here](#).

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Report by OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre: UK response, October 2022

Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Ambassador Yrjölä, for your timely report. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has fundamentally impacted the OSCE and undermined Euro-Atlantic security. Over the last two years, there has also been a reversal of a falling trend in fatalities from armed conflict globally, as highlighted by the UN Secretary General. Against this backdrop, it is more important than ever that the OSCE conflict cycle instruments are robust to deal with contemporary security challenges.

Ambassador, today is an opportunity to reflect and take stock of our work to promote comprehensive security. Prior to its invasion, Russia blocked the mandate renewals of the Border Observer Mission, the Special Monitoring Mission, and the Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine. Russia lied about its unprecedented military buildup on the borders of Ukraine and refused to engage in good faith in the Renewed European Security Dialogue. And since the 24 February, Russia, enabled by Belarus, has brought a new wave of indefensible suffering on the Ukrainian people across land, air, sea, and cyberspace. It has tried to change the status of Ukrainian territory through attempted annexation and sham referenda. And throughout, Russia continues to lie about it, week-in-week-out, right here in this room.

At the same time, Russia continues to undermine Georgia's sovereignty and violate its territorial integrity by recognising the so-called independence of Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions and its attempted borderisation tactics. In Moldova, Russian forces and munitions remain present without the consent of the Moldovan government. We continue to support efforts to ensure peaceful resolutions to the conflicts in Georgia and Moldova.

The Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC), as the OSCE 'nerve cell', plays a vital

role in responding to these situations, through its international reporting, early warning, dialogue facilitation, mediation, rehabilitation, and programme management. It continues to strengthen the security of States and wider regions through its support to the field missions, their host countries, and Special Representatives, as well as here in Vienna by providing invaluable support to the FSC.

We remain grateful to the Secretary General for her decisive action in providing early warning to the Permanent Council in February on the situation in Ukraine. Early warning is a vital tool to get right, and as the OSCE-wide Focal Point, we rely on CPC for its analysis in this space.

Thank you to all those involved for the important work in evacuating international mission members from the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) and supporting the relocation of national mission members to safer locations within the country in February. We call on Russia for the immediate release of our OSCE colleagues currently in detention in Donetsk and Luhansk.

We agree that conventional arms control and confidence building measures remain crucial. The Belarusian authorities' obfuscation and Russia's refusal to engage with the two invocations of the [Vienna Document](#) Chapter three mechanism was an important early warning signal. We share your concerns about the impact of recent military escalation between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and recognize the quick deployment of a 'needs assessment' to establish the facts and gather verified information in the conflict-affected areas.

We welcome the various tools being utilised in response to the crisis in Afghanistan, where OSCE activities can help to address vulnerabilities and support connectivity and development for the region.

We also welcome the role field missions play in facilitating dialogue to address the escalation of tensions in border areas.

In each of these cases, we have been pleased to see an inclusive, holistic and gender-sensitive approach adopted. Inclusivity and the role of women in particular must be mainstreamed into both the informal and formal aspects of peace processes, enabling an environment for women to be able to speak up for their rights, their communities, and their futures.

Ambassador, your report is a helpful reminder that we have a set of tools available to de-escalate and build trust. And while these tools can constantly be strengthened, we must recognise that all the available resources can only be as effective as we – States – allow them to be. We must demonstrate the political will to use OSCE and other resources and to fully implement the principles and commitments that underpin comprehensive security.

I join others in thanking you and your team for your ongoing support to each OSCE State facing a current conflict situation. The coming year will be no less challenging and will require our renewed commitment to conflict-prevention, securing and sustaining peace. Thank you.